

Message Text

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SUBJECT: WORLD PEACE THROUGH LAW CONFERENCE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

1. SUMMARY: HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES OCCUPIED THE SPOTLIGHT AT WORLD PEACE THROUGH LAW CONFERENCE. DISCUSSION INCLUDED SPIRITED DEBATE BETWEEN CRITICS AND DEFENDERS OF GOP HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD. ALTHOUGH FOREIGN DELEGATES SEEMED DISTURBED BY GOP USE OF CONFERENCE AS PROPAGANDA FORUM, MEDIA COVERAGE OF HUMAN RIGHTS HAS MADE PHILIPPINE PUBLIC MORE AWARE OF ISSUE. END SUMMARY.

2. FOCUS ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN WORLD PEACE THROUGH LAW CONFERENCE HERALDED BY WPTL PRESIDENT CHARLES RHYNE ON HIS ARRIVAL AND FURTHERED BY PRESIDENT MARCOS' "RETURN TO NORMALCY" SPEECH AUGUST 22, WAS MANIFESTED DURING CONFERENCE IN SEVERAL PANEL DISCUSSIONS ON INTERNATIONAL PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS. DEBATE BETWEEN CRITICS AND DEFENDERS OF GOP HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD WAS OFTEN SPIRITED AND OCCASIONALLY ERUPTED INTO HEATED SHOUTING MATCHES. PANEL SESSIONS WERE TELEVISED NATIONALLY PROVIDING RARE MEDIA COVERAGE OF DISSENT OPINION IN PHILIPPINES.

3. A MORNING SESSION ON INTERNATIONAL LEGAL PROTEC-

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TION OF HUMAN RIGHTS FEATURED LIVELY DEBATE BETWEEN PHILIPPINE PANELIST PURIFICACION QUISUMBING AND SEVERAL DELEGATES IN AUDIENCE ON WHETHER OR NOT INTERVENTION ACROSS NATIONAL BOUNDARIES IN THE NAME OF PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IS JUSTIFIED. (QUISUMBING ARGUED SUCH INTERVENTION NEVER JUSTIFIED.) US DELEGATE URGED THAT SINCE PRESIDENT

MARCOS AND CHIEF JUSTICE CASTRO DEFENDED MARTIAL LAW AT THE CONFERENCE, AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF JURISTS REPORTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN PHILIPPINES BE MADE AVAILABLE TO DELEGATES "TO PROVIDE BALANCE." PHILIPPINE SUPREME COURT JUSTICE MUNOZ-PALMA, WELL-KNOWN FOR HER INDEPENDENCE, INTEGRITY, AND DISSENT ON THE BENCH, ALLUDED FROM THE FLOOR TO HERRERA CASE. MUNOZ-PALMA NOTED ACCUSED TORTURERS ACQUITTAL BY THEIR FELLOW OFFICERS NOT SURPRISING AND SUGGESTED CASES OF THIS SORT DEMONSTRATE WHY INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTION TO PROTECT HUMAN RIGHTS MIGHT SOMETIMES BE JUSTIFIED. SESSION ALSO FEATURED ACRIMONIOUS FLOOR EXCHANGE BETWEEN ISRAELI DELEGATE, JUSTICE MEIR SHAGMAR, AND A PALESTINIAN NOW RESIDING IN GREAT BRITAIN, PROFESSOR MUSA MAZZAWI, ON THE RIGHT OF A CITIZEN TO LEAVE HIS OWN COUNTRY VERSUS RIGHT TO RETURN.

4. IN SESSION OF MANILA WORLD LAW CONFERENCE ENTITLED "PROGRAM OF IMPLEMENTATION OF INTERNATIONALLY PROTECTED HUMAN RIGHTS WITHIN NATIONS," DISCUSSION AGAIN RETURNED TO HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN PHILIPPINES. SUPREME COURT JUSTICE ENRIQUE FERNANDO PRESENTED PAPER WHICH DELINEATED LEGAL ARGUMENTS FOR CONSTITUTIONALITY OF MARTIAL LAW. HE FURTHER STATED THAT HUMAN RIGHTS WELL PROTECTED IN RP BY 1973 CONSTITUTION. FERNANDE ALSO STRESSED IMPORTANCE OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN "LOCKEAN" DISTRUST OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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GOVERNMENT AS EXHIBITED IN THE US AND "HEGELIAN" SYSTEM CHARACTERIZED BY ORGANIC, "PATERNALISTIC STATE," AS EXHIBITED IN PHILIPPINES. WHEN DISCUSSION OPEN TO FLOOR SOME CRITICISMS MADE OF PANELISTS' DEFENSE OF THEIR RESPECTIVE COUNTRIES' HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD. VOLUBLE ATTORNEY JUAN DAVID FORCIBLY TOOK THE FLOOR NEAR THE END OF THE SESSION AND LAUNCHED INTO VITROLIC CONDEMNATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN PHILIPPINES. HE STATED THAT HUMAN RIGHTS DEFILED HERE AND THAT TRIAL OF CASES BEFORE MILITARY TRIBUNAL WAS ILLEGAL.

5. DURING BOTH THESE SESSIONS ATMOSPHERE IN THE PACKED MEETING HALL WAS ANIMATED AND THE PARTICIPANTS EXCITED. AN INTEGRATED BAR CHAPTER PRESIDENT COMMENTED TO EMBOFF THAT SPIRITS WERE HIGH BECAUSE "WE DON'T LIKE MARTIAL LAW."

6. IN ANOTHER SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE DEALING WITH FREEDOM OF THE PRESS, ONE FILIPINO PARTICIPANT CRITICIZED CLOSING OF CATHOLIC NEWSPAPER THE COMMUNICATOR, AND DEMANDED ITS REOPENING.

7. COMMENT: MOST FOREIGN DELEGATES, PARTICULARLY THE AMERICANS, FOUND THE CONSTANT AND STRIDENT DEFENSE BY THE GOP OF ITS HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD UNPALATABLE, AND MANY WONDERED IF THE GOVERNMENT WAS NOT PROTESTING TOO MUCH.

NONTEHELESS, CONFERENCE AT LEAST FORCED GOP TO FOCUS ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN ITS DOMESTIC MEDIA, MAKING PUBLIC MORE AWARE OF THE ISSUE.

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